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AUTHOR	Hagerty, Patricia J.; Foster, Ann; Cobb, Brian
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the spelling practices of 10 classroom teachers in Poudre School District (Colorado) to determine their philosophies about teaching spelling, the practices they use, and the results they see. Subjects, 10 elementary teachers nominated "good teachers of spelling," were interviewed for approximately one hour and asked to submit examples of materials used when teaching spelling and a spelling log in which all teaching of spelling was recorded for a week. Five students from each classroom were interviewed in an attempt to determine their definition of spelling and their use of spelling strategies. Findings suggest that there is no one way to teach spelling; when teachers use programs that correlate highly with their beliefs about what is important in spelling instruction, they consider their students to be successful spellers. Recommendations include: words in a spelling list should be related to a common generalization or rule; if students choose their own words to learn, several words should be selected from which additional words with the same patterns can be generated; students should be involved in word play activities; students should be involved in many opportunities to write for "real" reasons; and spelling grades should be determined on the correctness of spelling in written work. (Contains an executive summary and 6 references.) (SC)

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Teaching Spelling
A Sampling of Exemplary Practices
In Poudre School District

February 1997

Patricia J. Hagerty, Ph.D., Project Manager

Ann Foster, Ed.D., Director
Brian Cobb, Ph.D., Director

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CS 216 778

Teaching Spelling: A sampling of Exemplary Practices in Poudre School District

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine exemplary instructional practices used to teach spelling in Poudre School District. Ten classroom teachers and 50 students from PSD elementary schools participated. Both teachers and students were interviewed, and teachers kept a week-long log of their teaching of spelling as well as submitted materials they used when teaching spelling.

The data collected as well as the conclusions and recommendations made by the study will be used by the PSD Spelling Committee as they examine spelling programs to adopt for district-wide use.

Interviews with Teachers

Principals and elementary teachers in PSD were asked to nominate teachers who they considered to be "good" teachers of spelling. Teachers could also nominate themselves. The nominators were asked to list specific reasons why they felt their nominees were "good" teachers of spelling. Reasons given ranged from very global responses such as, "a strong commitment to spelling," and "outstanding teacher," to specific criteria such as, "integrates spelling and vocabulary into all lessons," and "individualizes instruction for students." Teachers' responses in the interviews follow:

Beliefs about how children learn to spell

- Almost all teachers felt that learning to spell was developmental. (Students' developmental stages affect how they learn to spell.)
- Almost all felt students who were the best readers were also the best spellers.
- Children learn to spell with the right "tools," including proofreading; using the dictionary; general spelling "rules"; study methods; and using the computer spell check.

"Best practices" in teaching spelling

- Teaching rules or generalizations for words needed for everyday writing.
- Integrating the teaching of spelling throughout the day.
- Setting high expectations for correct spelling in student writing.
- Individualized spelling instruction, e.g., students choose words they want to learn.
- Word play, using a core list, teaching words in families, teaching study methods.

Methods used to teach spelling

There was as much variety in the methods as there were teachers.

- Several intermediate teachers introduce five core words per week and teach the core words in relationship to a word family or in some other context.
- All but one use lists and weekly tests, but the origin of the words on the lists varied.

Time per week spent teaching spelling
The amount of time ranged from 40 minutes per week in a primary grade classroom to a maximum of 130 minutes per week in an intermediate classroom.

Strengths of teachers' spelling programs
- Students took on more responsibility for learning how to spell; they had a "spelling conscience"—a desire and concern to spell correctly.
- Spelling in students' written work improved.

Carryover of spelling instruction into writing
- Some teachers emphatically saw a carry over; examination of regular written work revealed students applied what they learned in spelling instruction to their written work.
- Several hesitated about a carry over, noting that words learned for lists were not necessarily correctly spelled in written work.

Feedback received from parents
- All teachers reported that parents were pleased with the way spelling was taught. (Some assumed that parents were supportive, since they had not reacted negatively.)
- Parents think the spelling words found on lists are too easy, whether the words came from students' own writing or from high frequency lists.
- Teachers hesitated abandoning weekly lists because parents wanted—and expected—lists to come home each week.

Expectations of students? of parents? of teachers?
- Students need to take some responsibility for learning to spell.
- Parents need to help their children with their spelling homework, as well as read with them.
- Teachers have numerous expectations for themselves, including modeling good spelling, challenging the students, learning more about teaching, and making students accountable.

Determining a spelling grade
- Teachers divided spelling grades (in different proportions) between test scores, spelling in written work, and other activities such as homework.

INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

Five students (range of academic levels) were selected from each classroom to be interviewed about their views of spelling.

What is spelling?
Students' answers were *evenly distributed* in five categories, no matter how spelling was taught in their classroom. The students said spelling is a skill; an object (e.g., a test); communication; affective (e.g., fun); or something not in those categories.

How do you think you learned to spell?

Many students, no matter what their grade level or what kind of spelling program is used in their current classroom, said they learned to spell by *sounding out words* and by *reading books*. Intermediate grade students felt they learned to spell by *taking spelling tests* (tests forced them to study words). Many students said their *parents helped* them learn how to spell.

Should you always spell every word correctly in your writing?
Students answered overwhelmingly 'no,' "because nobody is perfect," "you can learn from your mistakes," "not everyone knows every word." Numerous students, however, did say that it was important to try to spell correctly.

What do you do when you don't know how to spell a word?
Students use a dictionary, ask the teacher, circle it and check later, sound it out, spell it the way it sounds, use a spell check on the computer, and/or use an electronic speller.

Do you have any tricks you use to help you remember how to spell some words?
Most of the students said they *did not* have any tricks to help them remember how to spell words (e.g., for *hear*, remember that you hear with your *ear*).

What would you like to do to get better at spelling?
Most of the students thought they could spell better if they *studied more* for their tests—by writing them down several times and by asking parents to give tests.

Do you think you are a good speller? Why or why not?
Most of the students *thought they were good spellers*—because they got good grades on their spelling tests; had a good memory; or they could sound out well.

Information from Spelling Logs and Artifacts

For the most part, the information in the spelling logs correlated with what the teachers had said in their interviews. A few of the logs were extremely detailed, creating a visual picture of what a period of spelling instruction in a "typical" week might look like. (See full report for details.)

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no *one* way to teach spelling. The participating teachers who strongly believed in the method they used to teach spelling, no matter what it was, were those who were most emphatic about their students' improvement in spelling; they self-reported their students to be successful spellers. (Teachers used different measurements to determine this 'success.')

Therefore, teachers should be able to choose from a number of current best practices when deciding how to teach spelling.

Common **best practices should be included in all spelling programs**, including:

- If a teacher chooses to use a list, the words should be related to a common spelling generalization or rule. If students choose their own words to learn, additional words with the same pattern(s) should accompany the self-chosen words on the students' spelling lists. (For example, if a student chooses the word *refreshment* to learn, s/he might generate a list of words using the prefix and base word such as *refreshing, refresher, refreshingly.*)

- Students should be involved in word play activities that help them understand how words are spelled. These kinds of activities should take the place of more traditional activities such as writing words in sentences and looking words up in the dictionary.

- Students should be involved in many opportunities to write for "real" reasons. Teaching spelling without application in daily writing sends students a message that spelling is isolated from writing. Teachers who gave students daily opportunities to write were the ones who said they saw the greatest improvement in spelling.

- Daily or weekly written work graded for spelling should be given the most, if not all, of the weight for spelling grades. This can convey to parents and students that spelling correctly in written work is what is most important about learning spelling. Studying words merely for a test does not help students understand the importance of good spelling in daily written work.

- If teachers choose not to use a traditional approach to teaching spelling, they must carefully explain their reasoning to parents, outline how they are teaching spelling, and explain how that instruction will benefit students.

TEACHING SPELLING:

A SAMPLING OF EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

IN POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Introduction

In Poudre School District, teachers use a variety of instructional practices to teach spelling. Which of those practices are considered to be "good"? Which, in the teachers' views, best help children learn to spell?

This study examined the spelling practices of ten classroom teachers in Poudre School District to determine their philosophies about teaching spelling, the practices they use, and the results they see. The purpose of the study was to determine if teachers were using "good" practices in the teaching of spelling that might be shared with other teachers in the district.

Procedures

Principals and elementary teachers in Poudre School District were asked to nominate teachers who they deemed to be "good" teachers of spelling. Teachers could also nominate themselves. Eleven teachers were nominated, and of those, ten were able to participate in the study. Participation was strictly voluntary. Of the ten teachers, five were intermediate teachers (grades 4-6) and five were primary teachers (grades 2-3). Three teachers taught multi-age classrooms: two taught grades 2/3 and one taught a 3/4. No kindergarten or first grade teacher participated.

The nominators were asked to list specific reasons why they felt their nominees were "good" teachers of spelling. Reasons given ranged from very global responses such as, "a strong commitment to spelling," "outstanding teacher," "very involved in improving spelling," "strong background with formal training and experience with spelling," to much more specific criteria such as, "integrates spelling and vocabulary into all her lessons," "incorporates 'personal' words for individual needs," and "individualizes instruction for students."

Each nominated teacher was interviewed for approximately one hour. Each was asked to submit examples of materials used when teaching spelling, such as letters to parents, worksheets used by the students, etc. Each teacher was asked to submit a spelling log in which all teaching of spelling

was recorded for a week. In addition five students from each classroom were interviewed in an attempt to determine their definition of spelling and their use of spelling strategies.

Summary of Spelling Interviews

Nine questions were asked during each of the spelling interviews. These questions were designed to determine the teachers' belief systems about the teaching of spelling, what they considered to be "best" practices, what they viewed as the strengths of their programs, and if they saw the transfer of correct spelling into students' writing.

A summary of the teachers' answers follow each question.

1) What do you believe about how kids learn to spell?

Almost all teachers, even those at the intermediate level, felt that spelling was developmental.

Each primary teacher noted that children go through stages when learning to spell, and that their role was to help children move through those stages.

Almost every teacher felt that the students who were the best readers were also the best spellers. When asked why they thought so, most mentioned that the more a word is seen, the more likely it will be learned.

Several teachers stated that children will learn to spell if given the right "tools." These tools included teaching students how to proofread for spelling, using the dictionary, calling attention to words posted around the room, teaching generalizations, teaching a study method, and using the spell check on a computer.

Several teachers expressed belief that spelling instruction should be individualized to meet the particular needs of each student. The methods used to individualize spelling instruction ranged from providing three levels of lists to allowing students to choose their own words for lists from the words they misspelled or wanted to learn how to spell.

2) What do you consider to be "best practices" in spelling?

Seven of the ten teachers noted that teaching rules or generalizations was a good practice. When asked why, most responded that knowing these rules or generalizations would help students spell words they needed for everyday writing. One primary teacher mentioned that she helped the students come up with the generalization, rather than teaching it to them directly.

Several teachers said that a best practice was to integrate the teaching of spelling throughout the day. Each of these teachers, however, did have a separate time set aside for spelling instruction.

Several teachers mentioned that setting high expectations for correct spelling in student writing was a best practice. These teachers were the same ones who said they definitely noticed an application of what they taught in spelling to everyday writing experiences.

Other answers to this question included word play, using a core list, teaching words in families, teaching students how to study a word, and never telling students the spelling of a word unless they tried to spell it first.

3) Describe how you teach spelling.

There was as much variety in the methods used to teach spelling as there were teachers who were interviewed. Several intermediate teachers were using Rebecca Sitton's spelling program, although none were using it in the same way. With this program, students are introduced to five core words per week. Each of the core words is taught in relationship to a word family or in some other context. For example, the word *block* might be related to other words in the same word family (*clock, stock, rock*), or as a root word (*blocker, blocked, blocking*). Students spend time during the week involved in word play with the core words. Students are also responsible for correctly spelling certain high frequency words in their daily written work as well as any words found around the room on walls or the chalkboard.

With one exception (a teacher using Rebecca Sitton's program), all teachers used lists and gave weekly tests on those lists. What varied was the origin of the words on the list. A few teachers were using lists found in spelling basals, and several asked students to select misspelled words from their writing. Other teachers selected words from high frequency lists. Several teachers used a combination of words from high frequency lists, misspelled words from students' writing, and other student-selected words.

With the exception of two teachers, all taught rules and generalizations through mini-lessons. In some cases, these rules and generalizations formed the focus for the words on the lists (e.g., *i* before *e* except after *c*). In other cases, these generalizations were taught as a supplement to the word lists. Only one teacher mentioned that the mini-lesson was based on spelling problems the students were exhibiting in their written work.

4) How much time per week do you spend teaching spelling?

The amount of time spent per week on spelling varied by teacher. One teacher noted that it was too difficult to determine, since she integrated the teaching of spelling into the teaching of reading and writing during individual reading and/or writing conferences.

Time spent on teaching spelling ranged from a minimum of 40 minutes per week in a primary grade classroom to a maximum of 130 minutes per week in an intermediate classroom. The intermediate teacher explained that the time allocated for spelling included vocabulary instruction as well as word play. In general, however, most teachers spent from 15-30 minutes per day in spelling instruction. Several teachers noted that more time was spent on Monday when a pretest was given.

5) What do you see as the strengths of your program?

Several teachers, most notably those using Rebecca Sitton's program, noted that the biggest strength was the fact that spelling in students' written work improved, and that students took on

more responsibility for learning how to spell. Several described this as a "spelling conscience": a desire and concern to spell correctly. The teachers who were using mini-lessons to teach spelling generalizations and rules also noted that students seemed more aware of the importance of spelling correctly in written work.

Teachers who gave students the opportunity to select words for their weekly tests, either from writing or other materials, noted that the students seemed more interested in spelling.

Almost every teacher, no matter how she taught spelling, said that her program provided students with a focus on spelling. Each saw this as a strength.

6) Do you see carryover into writing? If so, how do you know?

"No doubt in my mind" was how one intermediate grade teacher answered when asked this question. She said she knew through examining students' daily written work. "Heavens, yes!" answered one primary grade teacher, who said that she keeps writing samples and can see the stages students go through as their spelling develops. "A lot," was the response of another intermediate teacher who held students responsible for correct spelling in almost all written work.

Other teachers were not as emphatic in their responses. In fact several hesitated when answering, noting that words learned for lists were not necessarily correctly spelled in written work.

Only one teacher mentioned that although she saw improvement in written work, the ITBS scores for spelling did not improve.

7) What feedback have you received about your program from parents?

In general, all teachers reported that parents were pleased with the way spelling was taught. This was true even with the one teacher who did not use lists. One primary teacher who asks students to select misspelled words from writing for their lists noted that parents were happy to see these words on the spelling lists.

Several teachers noted that parents think the spelling words found on lists are too easy, whether the words came from students' own writing or from high frequency lists. A number of teachers in the study expressed an interest in changing their spelling programs so that students would not have lists, but said that they hesitated doing so because parents wanted – and expected – lists to come home each week.

It is also interesting to note that several teachers assumed that parents supported the way spelling was taught, since they had not had negative calls or comments from parents.

8) What are your expectations of your students? Their parents? Of yourself?

No matter how they taught spelling, all teachers said that they expected students to take some responsibility for learning to spell, whether it be to study for the test or spell well in written work. Those who used the Rebecca Sitton program stated that they expected students to spell the core words and a list of "no excuse" words correctly in everyday writing activities. One primary

teacher who did not use the Sitton program also said that she expected her students to correctly spell high frequency words in daily written work. Two fifth grade teachers expected their students to use their personal dictionaries and edit their daily work.

All teachers who gave weekly tests expected the parents to help the students study for it. One teacher mentioned that she expected the parents to help students find a place to study. Several teachers said that they expected parents to help with spelling homework. One teacher noted that she expected parents to read to their children or have their children read to them, since she believed that students who are better readers are better spellers.

The teachers interviewed for this study had numerous expectations for themselves. Only one mentioned that she felt it important to model good spelling. This same teacher said that it was her responsibility to challenge her students so that they were learning appropriate words. Three mentioned that they held themselves responsible for learning more about spelling so they could do a better job of teaching it. Four teachers noted that they needed to make the students accountable for correctly spelling words in written work.

9) How do you determine a spelling grade?

All teachers were responsible for marking a spelling grade on the report card. Only one teacher determined the grade solely by the way students spelled in written work. Each week, she graded a sample of daily written work for spelling. The students were not always told what piece would be graded as such. Five teachers determined the spelling grade by dividing up the grade between test scores and spelling in written work as well as other activities such as homework. These five teachers were also the ones who said they saw the greatest carryover of their teaching into daily written work.

The rest of the teachers determined the spelling grade based on the scores of weekly tests. One said she lowered the spelling grade, even if the weekly tests were good, if a student's journal writing was not showing good spelling.

Student Responses to Spelling Interviews

Five students were selected from each classroom to be interviewed about their views of spelling. Teachers were asked to select the five students from a range of academic levels in the classroom. The following section lists each question and a summary of the students' answers.

1) What is spelling?

Answers to this questions were categorized into five groups:

- a skills-based answer (spelling is sounding out words, etc.);
- an object-based answer (spelling is a test, etc.);
- a communication-based answer (good spelling helps others read your work, etc.);
- an affective answer (spelling is fun, etc.);
- and an "other" (answers did not fit into any group).

Surprisingly, answers from students were evenly distributed across all groups, no matter how spelling was taught in a classroom. As an example, in a primary grade classroom where the teacher has students choose words from writing and other materials for a weekly list, students gave skills-based, communication-based, and affective answers.

2) How do you think you learned to spell?

Many students, no matter what their grade level or what kind of spelling program is used in their current classroom, said they learned to spell by sounding out words. In several classrooms, students said they learned to spell by reading books. These answers correlated with the classrooms where teachers believed that good readers are generally good spellers. These teachers must be sharing their beliefs about the connection between spelling and reading with their students.

Several students, especially in the intermediate grades, felt they learned to spell by taking spelling tests. Because they had to take spelling tests, they spent time studying the words. Many students gave credit to their parents for helping them learn how to spell, since it was often the parents who helped them study for tests.

3) Should you always spell every word correctly in your writing? Why or why not?

The overwhelming answer was a resounding "no." Answers to the second part of the question ranged from "because nobody is perfect," to "you can learn from your mistakes," to "not everyone knows every word." Numerous students, however, did say that they might not always correctly spell words, but that it was important to try. This was especially true of the students from classrooms in which at least some of the spelling grade was based on spelling in written work.

4) What do you do when you don't know how to spell a word: a) in a rough (first) draft and b) in a final draft?

Answers to each part of the question were basically the same; the only exception was that more students said they would use a dictionary on a final draft than on a first draft. No matter what kind of spelling program the teacher used, the students' answers to each part of the question included the following: use a dictionary, ask the teacher, circle it and check later, sound it out, spell it the way it sounds, use a spell check on the computer, and use an electronic speller like the Franklin.

5) Do you have any tricks you use to help you remember how to spell some words?

Most of the students said they did not have any tricks to help them remember how to spell words. The few examples that were given included: for *museum*, remember that *e* comes before *u* in the alphabet; in *friends*, remember that they last until the *end* of the week; if a word ends in a consonant and has a short vowel sound, double the final letter before adding an ending; for *hear*, remember that you hear with your *ear*.

6) What would you like to do to get better at spelling? How will you go about doing that?

Most of the students thought they could spell better if they studied more for their tests. The best way to study was to practice words by writing them down several times and by asking parents to give tests. Many gave specific steps to use when studying a word: look at it, say it, spell it out loud, cover the word and write it, check to see if it's spelled right. Several said they thought they could get better at spelling by reading more.

7) Who is a good speller that you know? What makes him/her a good speller?

Most students named a classmate when asked this question. They thought this classmate was a good speller because s/he studied hard, practiced a lot, or just seemed to know how to spell words. Only one student said a classmate was a good speller because of grades achieved on a spelling test.

Several students named their siblings or parents as good spellers. The most common reason given was that the person could spell a word for the student when asked.

8) Do you think you are a good speller? Why or why not?

Most of the students thought they were good spellers. When examining their reasons why, the majority thought so because they got good grades on their spelling tests; they equated good spelling with a grade on a test. One said he was a good speller because he had a good memory; another said she could sound out well. Still another said she was a good speller because her mom and teacher told her she spelled well.

Information from Spelling Logs and Artifacts

For the most part, the information in the spelling logs correlated what the teachers had said in their interviews. A few of the logs were extremely detailed, outlining specific procedures each day. These detailed vignettes helped create a visual picture of what a period of spelling instruction in a "typical" week might look like. One intermediate teacher using the Rebecca Sitton program gave a day-by-day account of how she introduced the core words by creating a context for each of the words. For example, the word *toward* was introduced by talking about the accepted spellings of *toward* and *towards* as well as the antonyms of those words (*backward, backwards*). She also outlined how she graded a piece of writing for spelling; in a two paragraph written response to a literature book, she looked to see if the "priority words" (words at that grade level that must be spelled consistently correctly in students' everyday writing) and text-related words (words found in the literature book) were correctly spelled.

A primary teacher using a spelling basal explained how she gave the students a test that is set up in the same format as the ITBS spelling subtest. The students were asked to look at a group of four words, choose which word was correctly spelled, and fill in the bubble by the correct choice. After this exercise, the students chose an activity from five different centers: typing spelling words using a computer; practicing words with partners on white boards; writing words on flashcards; shaping letters with play dough; and writing spelling words that have been dictated into a tape recorder.

One teacher who said she taught a lot of spelling spontaneously through individual and group reading and writing lessons and conferences gave some examples in her log. The students in one reading group noticed that many of the words in the story had prefixes and suffixes. This began a discussion on the spelling of several words, one being *biography*. She explained how *bio* meant *life* and *graph* meant *write*. Using the word *prologue*, she showed how *pro* meant *before* and *log* meant *journal*. Both of these explanations helped the students understand the meaning behind the spelling of the words.

Most of the artifacts could be divided into two groups: information for students and information for parents. In the first category, a fifth grade teacher included a letter she wrote to her students explaining the components of her spelling program. Students were instructed to keep the letter in their spelling notebooks. The students and their parents were asked to sign the letter to indicate they understood the program and its expectations. This same teacher included a worksheet she developed that helped integrate spelling with vocabulary and word study. Students were asked to write the guide words, respelling, part of speech, word history, other forms of the word, synonyms and antonyms, and other words that have similar patterns as the target word.

Several teachers included handouts they designed for students giving the directions for studying a word. Each of these generally followed the same format: say the word and spell it orally; cover the word and write it; check to see if the word is correct; cover the word and rewrite; and check again for accuracy.

Other artifacts included notes teachers wrote to parents explaining how they would be teaching spelling during the school year. One of the most intriguing letters was written by one of the intermediate teachers who determined students' spelling grades by looking at spelling in written work. In the letter, the teacher explained that students would no longer be tested weekly on word lists, "but assessed the way adults' spelling is assessed in the workplace and community – in everyday writing."

One teacher included a detailed packet of information designed to explain the spelling program to parents. This packet included a letter to parents, lists of high frequency words, definitions of the kinds of words to be taught in the program (core words, springboard words, priority words), and a list of commonly asked questions and their answers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

By examining the data collected from the teacher interviews, weekly logs, artifacts, and student interviews, the following conclusions and recommendations can be made:

1) The teachers in the study all deeply cared about teaching spelling and all held themselves responsible for helping their students become better spellers.

2) Each teacher in the study had chosen the way she wanted to teach spelling and each teacher was directly teaching spelling. Spelling instruction was not left to chance. Of the ten teachers in the study, at least seven strongly believed that the method they were using was the best for

their students. These teachers also were the ones who were the most emphatic that their students' spelling in written work was improving. This means that teachers should probably be given a choice as to how they want to teach spelling. Perhaps the spelling committee could choose three or four research-based spelling programs and ask the teachers to choose one of those to use. Choice leads to ownership, even with teachers.

3) All teachers involved continue to search for ways to improve their spelling programs. At least one verbalized that she thought participation in the study would help improve her spelling program. Several said they would like to teach spelling in a way that does not involve weekly lists, since they did not usually see the carryover from memorization of words on a test to weekly writing activities. They were reluctant to do so because of parental expectations that a list should be sent home each week. The one teacher who did not use lists said that she was very careful to explain to parents her understanding of how children learn to spell and gives concrete reasons why she decided to teach spelling without lists. She also challenged the parents to support her beliefs (spelling matters most in written work) at home. This means that if teachers choose not to use a traditional approach to teaching spelling, they must explain carefully their reasoning to parents and outline, in detail, how they are teaching spelling and how they see that instruction benefiting their students. Routman (1996) includes a list of ways teachers might explain their spelling programs to parents and others.

4) Teachers who graded a weekly piece of written work for spelling were the ones who said they saw the greatest improvement in spelling in daily writing activities. It is a recommendation of this study that teachers, no matter how they teach spelling, collect weekly writing samples from their students and grade these samples for spelling. These weekly grades should be given the most, if not all, the weight when determining a spelling grade for the report card. If students and parents understand that the most important thing about learning to spell is to spell correctly in written work, they will begin to understand that memorizing words for a weekly spelling test is not what makes a good speller.

5) One question that was not asked formally in the interviews, but was discussed, related to how much time was spent on reading and writing in each classroom. In some cases, teachers spent more time teaching spelling than writing. Teachers who regularly taught writing and gave students daily opportunities to write were the ones who said they saw the greatest improvement in spelling. All students need daily opportunities to write. Teachers might as well not spend time teaching spelling if opportunities are not provided for daily application through "real" writing experiences.

6) Current research in the teaching of spelling (Templeton, 1991) suggests that if lists of words are given to students, the words should have common patterns or features. If the spelling committee examines the possibility of using spelling basals, members should keep this in mind. Teachers who ask students to select their own spelling words from written work or from other sources, should involve students in some kind of activities that involve generating several words from a selected word. For example, if a student chooses the word *refreshment* to learn, s/he might generate a list of words using the prefix and base word such as *refreshing, refresher, refreshingly*, etc.

7) Current research in the teaching of spelling (Bloodgood, 1991; Bolton & Snowball, 1993; Gentry & Gillet, 1993) speaks to the fact that students should be involved in word play activities to understand how words are spelled. Almost every teacher interviewed involved students in some sort of word play during daily spelling activities. If the spelling committee looks at spelling basals, members should carefully consider the kinds of activities students are asked to complete. Writing words in sentences and looking words up in dictionaries just to write their respellings does not help students learn why words are spelled a certain way. The authors mentioned in the first sentence introduce several different kinds of word play activities in their publications.

To summarize, it is important to note that there is no one way to teach spelling. When teachers use programs that correlate highly with their beliefs about what is important in spelling instruction, they consider their students to be successful spellers. However, there are best practices that should be included in all spelling programs. They include:

1) If a teacher chooses to use a list, the words should be related to a common spelling generalization or rule. Teachers should help students understand, through mini-lessons, how other words can be spelled using the same generalization or rule.

2) If students choose their own words to learn, several words should be selected from which additional words with the same pattern(s) can be generated.

3) Students should be involved in word play activities that help them understand how words are spelled. These kinds of activities should take the place of more traditional activities such as writing words in sentences.

4) Students should be involved in many opportunities to write for "real" reasons. Teaching spelling without application in daily writing sends students a message that spelling is isolated from writing.

5) Spelling grades should be determined on the correctness of spelling in written work. Studying words merely for a test does not help students understand the importance of good spelling in daily written work.

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